



What to expect on the day of your stem cell transplant

You are scheduled to receive a stem cell transplant. These stem cells were either

- *donated earlier by you (autologous), or*
- *donated by a matched donor (allogeneic).*

Stem cells rebuild a person's bone marrow after chemotherapy and radiation therapy. They do this by finding their way into the bone marrow. Once inside the bone marrow, stem cells grow into red blood cells, platelets, white blood cells, and lymphocytes. If you have received a transfusion of blood products, receiving a stem cell transplant will be similar.

Below is a general description of what you can expect on the day of your stem cell transplant. Please ask your nurse or doctor if you have more questions.

What happens before my transplant?

The day of your stem cell transplant will start out like most other days in the hospital. You will receive your medications as usual and be able to eat your meals. If you are to receive stem cells that have been frozen and stored, your nurse will give you Tylenol and Benadryl about 30 to 60 minutes before the infusion starts. These medications help prevent an allergic reaction to DMSO, the preservative used to freeze and store the stem cells. If you are to receive fresh stem cells (i.e., not previously frozen), Tylenol and Benadryl will not be needed.

Where will I receive my transplant? What happens once it begins?

Your stem cell transplant will be done in your room. During the transplant, you will also receive saline through your I.V. Your nurse will often check your vital signs.

Will stem cells be given by injection or through an I.V.?

Stem cells are packaged in small bags or large syringes. Like blood products or medications, the contents of either the bags or the syringes will be infused into your I.V. catheter. There is no set number of bags and/or syringes patients receive during a transplant.

How long will the transplant take?

Each bag or syringe can take five to fifteen minutes to infuse. But when frozen cells are used, each bag or syringe must be thawed just before use. If you are going to receive previously frozen stem cells, you will spend most of your time waiting for a thawed bag or syringe to arrive on your unit.

The entire process may take several hours.

What can I do during my transplant?

You may rest in bed or sit up in a chair. You may also eat, move around, and visit with family members and friends. Some patients even like to have pictures taken during their stem cell transplant.

But whatever you wish to do, you must stay in your room during the entire transplant.

Will I have side effects?

Most people tolerate the stem cell infusion well, but side effects are possible. If they occur, these side effects are due to the preservative, DMSO. Side effects include:

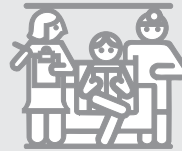
- allergic reactions
- nausea
- flushing
- rash
- chest tightness
- shortness of breath
- chills

Please tell your nurse right away if you have these or other side effects.

If any of these side effects occur, the infusion may be slowed or stopped. Your doctor or nurse will take quick action, and the stem cell infusion should be able to continue.

What about odor?

The preservative DMSO gives off an odor that some people compare to creamed corn. Your visitors may notice this odor a short time into your stem cell infusion, and it may last for a day or so. While you might not notice the smell, you may have an odd taste in your mouth. Sucking on hard candies may help get rid of it.



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This information is prepared specifically for patients participating in clinical research at the Warren Grant Magnuson Clinical Center at the National Institutes of Health and is not necessarily applicable to individuals who are patients elsewhere. If you have questions about the information presented here, talk to a member of your healthcare team.

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